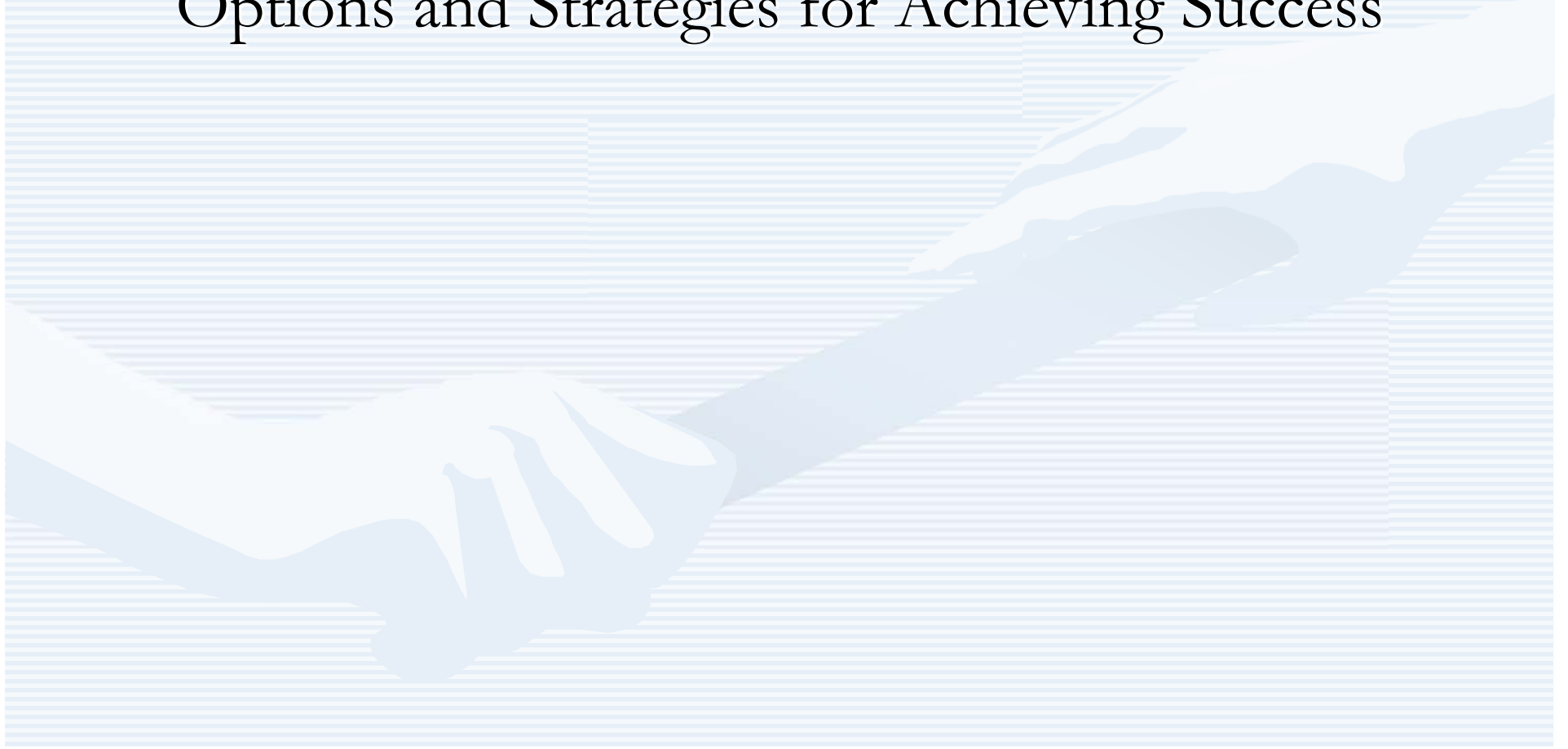# Creating New Plans:
# Options and Strategies for Achieving Success

# Creating New Plans

- As we've discussed, planning is about *change*
- When we embark on a legitimate, inclusive planning process we understand that people will expect things to be different, otherwise, why bother?
- Similarly, we must be sure that the efforts we put forth are consistent with our goals – we must monitor our process and we must evaluate our outcomes – otherwise, why bother?

# Creating New Plans

- From the needs identified, from the priorities established, from the performance measures chosen, we must create a living, breathing plan

- What do we intend to accomplish?

- How?

- By when?

- With what resources?

# Creating New Plans

- *Plans* are simply blueprints, or maps that guide your activities toward achievement of your goals

- Your priorities provide some of those goals but as just discussed, there are likely other goals you also need to address

- Further, your priorities may be so broad as to provide little direction

- As we've just discussed, you will need to distill your priorities into areas of focus

# Creating New Plans

- Why does this matter?
- A good plan relies on a set of *objectives*
  - to provide more specific direction
  - to frame your activities
  - to communicate your intentions
  - to ultimately evaluate your process and your outcomes

# Creating New Plans

- "improve pregnancy outcomes" is a goal
- "reduce infant mortality" is a more specific goal
- "reduce low birth weight by 10% by 2010" is an objective . . . but can you achieve it?
- "reduce prenatal smoking by 50% by 2010" is an objective and may be something you can achieve
- "50% of pregnant smokers will complete the highly evaluated cessation program each year" is an objective and may be something you can achieve

# Creating New Plans

- Note that we identified both an *outcome* objective and a *process* objective

  - The *outcome* is to reduce smoking among pregnant women

  - The *process* is to get them to complete a smoking cessation program

- The outcome is what you intend to achieve, the process is how you intend to achieve it

# Creating New Plans

- The distinction between an outcome and a process objective is often a matter of degrees

- If you are comfortable tackling low birth weight, then reducing low birth weight can be your outcome and reducing prenatal smoking will be your process

- If you aren't even sure you want to be accountable for reducing prenatal smoking, then the outcome might be completion of the cessation program and the process might be the outreach you do to increase enrollment
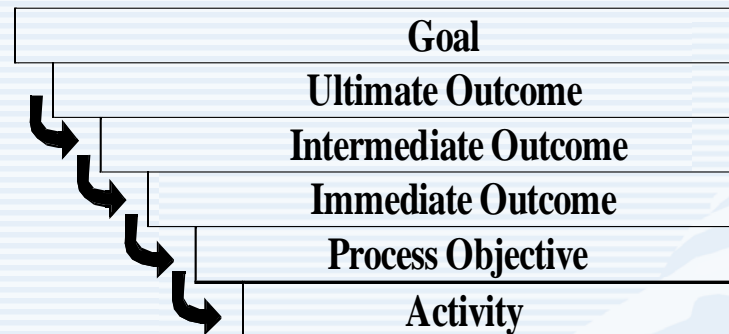
# Creating New Plans

- There is no magic here! Use whatever labels and models you like, but be sure to address both your intended outcomes and the processes you will use to achieve them
  - Need to demonstrate what you achieved
  - Need to describe how you achieved it
  - So the rest of us can replicate something that works!

# Creating New Plans

- Remember to remain within your comfort level and within your sphere of influence – do not bite off more than you can chew –

- At the same time, you must link whatever you do back to the original goals/priorities/performance measures you set

- Stakeholder advocates have to see that you remain true to the vision

# Choosing Levels of Influence

| |
|---|
| Goal |
| Ultimate Outcome |
| Intermediate Outcome |
| Immediate Outcome |
| Process Objective |
| Activity |

# Creating New Plans

- The truth is that nothing is ever as simple as "Problem A" responds to "Solution B"

- Often we must consider multi-pronged approaches to get at our issues

- Remember the MCH Pyramid – force yourself to examine every priority/program initiative against the levels of the pyramid – what could you do within each level that would make a difference?

# Creating New Plans

- Remember the MCH Ten Essential Services – consider each one in relation to the issue you are trying to address
  - Have you forgotten anything?
  - Are there opportunities here you hadn't considered?
  - Is there a step you maybe missed?
- Use the tools you have to make your life easier

# Creating New Plans

- *Reality Check*

# Creating New Plans

Donna's exhortations:

- Your ultimate responsibility is to be a leader and to develop systems that support the optimal health of children and their families

- Advocating with others to achieve objectives is a legitimate activity

- Policy development is a legitimate activity

- Developing or enhancing data systems to support planning and evaluation is a legitimate activity

# Creating New Plans

- We would strongly encourage you to go back and revisit each of your stated priorities as well as the programmatic efforts you will continue and those you will explore

- Be clear about the level of influence – what can you reasonably hope to effect through your efforts?

- Examples from the first small group discussion

# Creating New Plans

- Remember too, that not only do you have to revisit the priorities but you need to revisit the strategies you selected

- The strategies you identified when you made this a priority might not hold up in the light of day

- Also "things happen while you plan" – the landscape might have changed such that your original idea isn't as compelling any more, or a new opportunity may have presented itself

# Creating New Plans

- It is also entirely possible that you will devote special energy to only a few "new" efforts

- Many of your priorities reflect ongoing activities

- If they're going well, you need only monitor and communicate their ongoing progress and make sure your evaluation plans are in place (more later on this subject)

# Creating New Plans

- Change is in order if you are enhancing or modifying an existing effort, if you are embarking on something entirely new or if you are exploring one of those "C" list developmental priorities

- In these cases, the plan may require something other than quantifiable objectives to provide direction

# Creating New Plans

- If we've identified childhood obesity as a clear and present issue but have no baseline data nor a clear strategic intervention, our "objectives" will look more like activities

- Prevent childhood obesity is the goal

- Encourage healthy eating is a more immediate goal

- Increase physical activity is a more immediate goal

# Creating New Plans

- How we do these things may be less clear
- We may need to begin by
  - Reviewing the literature
  - Developing a data collection strategy
  - Creating a coalition
  - Exploring existing nutrition and physical activity policies and programs or other possible avenues of influence

# Creating New Plans

- Staff still need to be assigned, resources directed toward these efforts, progress monitored and completion recorded

- The "measurable objective" for these types of efforts will simply be that they be completed by a date certain

# Creating New Plans

- So, distill the priorities into workable targets
- Determine the level of effort appropriate to the task
- (Re)consider the strategies you identified and now,
- Consider your best options for succeeding in working that strategy toward that priority

# Options and Strategies for Achieving Success

1. Do you need new authority for these efforts?
2. Do you need new dollars for these efforts?
3. Do you need to expand existing efforts to include new efforts?
4. Do you need to stop doing something so that you can start doing something new?
5. Do you need to retrain or reassign your staff?
6. Do you need to modify your allocation processes?

# Options and Strategies

*Legislative Advocacy*

- Follow your agency's rules

  - You can always educate . . .

- Engage key members and their staff outside of session

- Enlist your stakeholders to help during the legislative session

- "We can ill afford to shun political activism"

# Options and Strategies

*Writing proposals for funding*

- Government Grants

- Foundation Grants

- Both want a CLEAR description of the problem/need, the target population/setting, your proposed strategy with measurable objectives, your evaluation plan and partnering entities

# Options and Strategies

*Writing proposals for funding, con't*

- If you did the first part right (i.e. the needs assessment and the determination of the priority), the key elements for the proposal should be readily available and the logic model that links solution x with problem y already established

# Options and Strategies

*Writing proposals for funding, con't*

- Be focused!

- Follow the instructions!

- Proof-read the proposal

- Read the evaluation criteria – have someone else read the proposal and the criteria and give you an honest assessment

- Consider your plans for continuation  . . .

# Options and Strategies

*Reassessing program/activity capacity*

- Most of us organize our staff into units of some sort

  – Do you evaluate your units periodically?

  – Which are overworked or understaffed?

  – Which are underworked or overstaffed?

- Where might there be room for additional effort?

# Options and Strategies

*Reassessing program/activity capacity, con't*

- Beyond assessing organizational capacity, you might conduct a talent/interest inventory among your staff and your grantees

- What preparation do they have? What knowledge? What skills?

- What would they *like* to do? Positive and productive activity is often motivated by interest and an opportunity to try something long coveted

# Options and Strategies

*Reassessing program/activity capacity, con't*

- Who are your shining stars?  Are the changes you contemplate opportunities to give someone more responsibility?

- Is this a good time to consider reorganizing and perhaps giving some folks a shot at management or leadership roles?

- And/or, are these opportunities to get someone out of management and back into program development?

# Options and Strategies

*Reassessing program/activity capacity, con't*

- You might also look to the capacity and talent within your grantees
  - Could they be induced to try something new?
  - Do some of them need to rethink their roles in your overall system?
  - How do you evaluate your grantees? Do you hold them accountable for YOUR goals?
  - Is it time to rethink the type of grantees, the funding formula or the scope of work to better align with your new objectives?

# Options and Strategies

*Reassessing program/activity capacity, con't*

- Finally, what opportunities exist for you to train or retrain some of your staff?

- What opportunities exist for you to provide technical assistance to your grantees?

- What incentives can you create to entice folks to come along either with the old plan or, ideally the new one?

# Options and Strategies

*Eliminating a program or activity*

- How large is the constituency for this effort?
- Is there any other way to provide this service?
  - Within the agency, in another agency
  - In the community
- Gather the supporting evidence . . .
- Plan the communication strategy . . .

# Options and Strategies

*Advocating with others*

- The responsibility for much of what effects MCH rests with other agencies

- Seek to form partnerships as you seek to develop systems that are responsive to the needs you've identified

- Find common ground – invite them over – share your data – support their efforts – consider a joint effort or a swap - help them do the right thing

# Options and Strategies

*Shoring up the data systems for monitoring and evaluation*

- Inventory the data bases you routinely rely upon
  - Do you have all the data elements you need?
  - Do you have user agreements in place?
- Can you piggy-back on existing or planned surveillance or survey efforts?
- Can you host periodic public forums or focus groups?
- What do your grantees provide to you? What feedback do you give to them to assure data quality?

# Options and Strategies

*Looking for best practices*

- Reviewing the literature

- Gathering conference abstracts

- Searching Title V IS

- Combing other states web sites

- Calling your colleagues!

- Please don't reinvent the wheel and if you develop something new, PUBLISH IT!

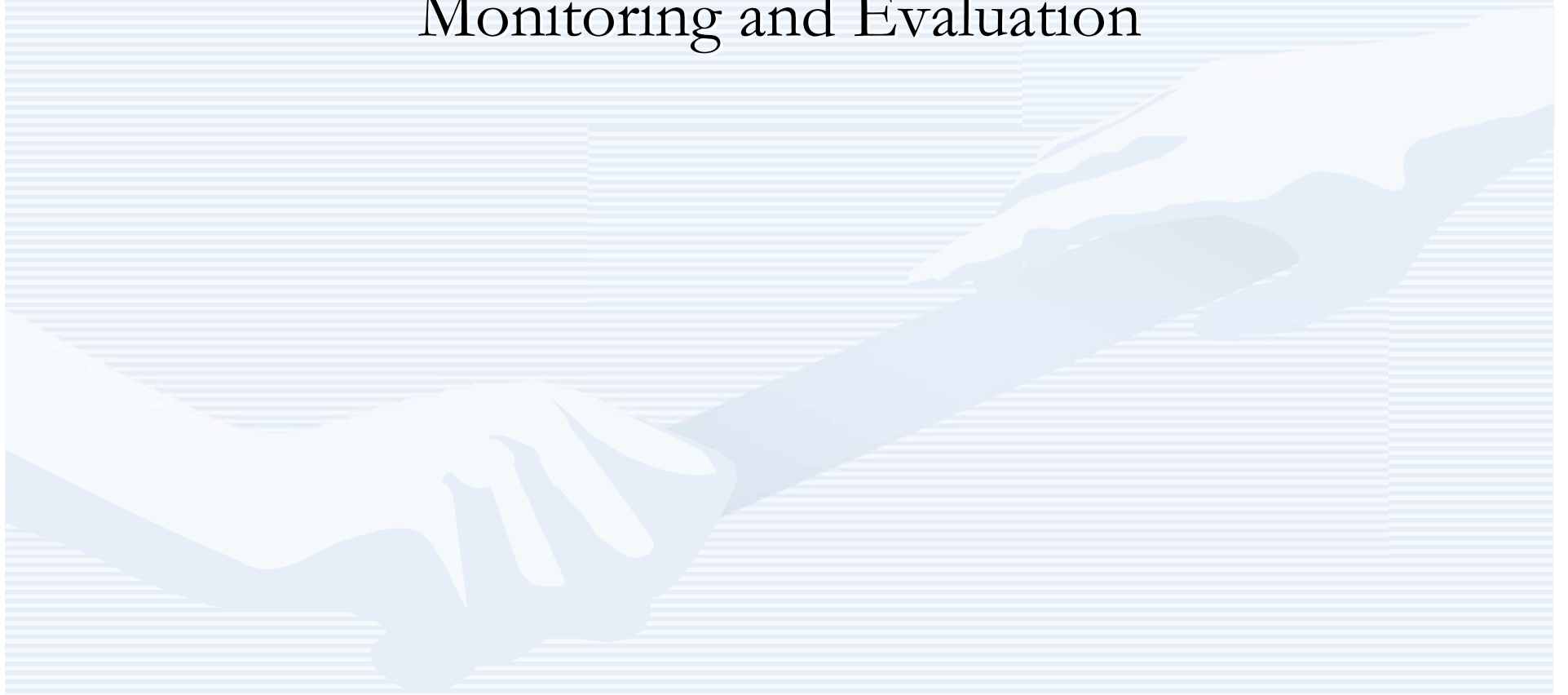# Small Group Discussion II

**From Priority to Action**

- Pre-assigned groups

- Groups elect a recorder/spokesperson

- Respond to the questions on the handout

- Prepare to report back to the larger group
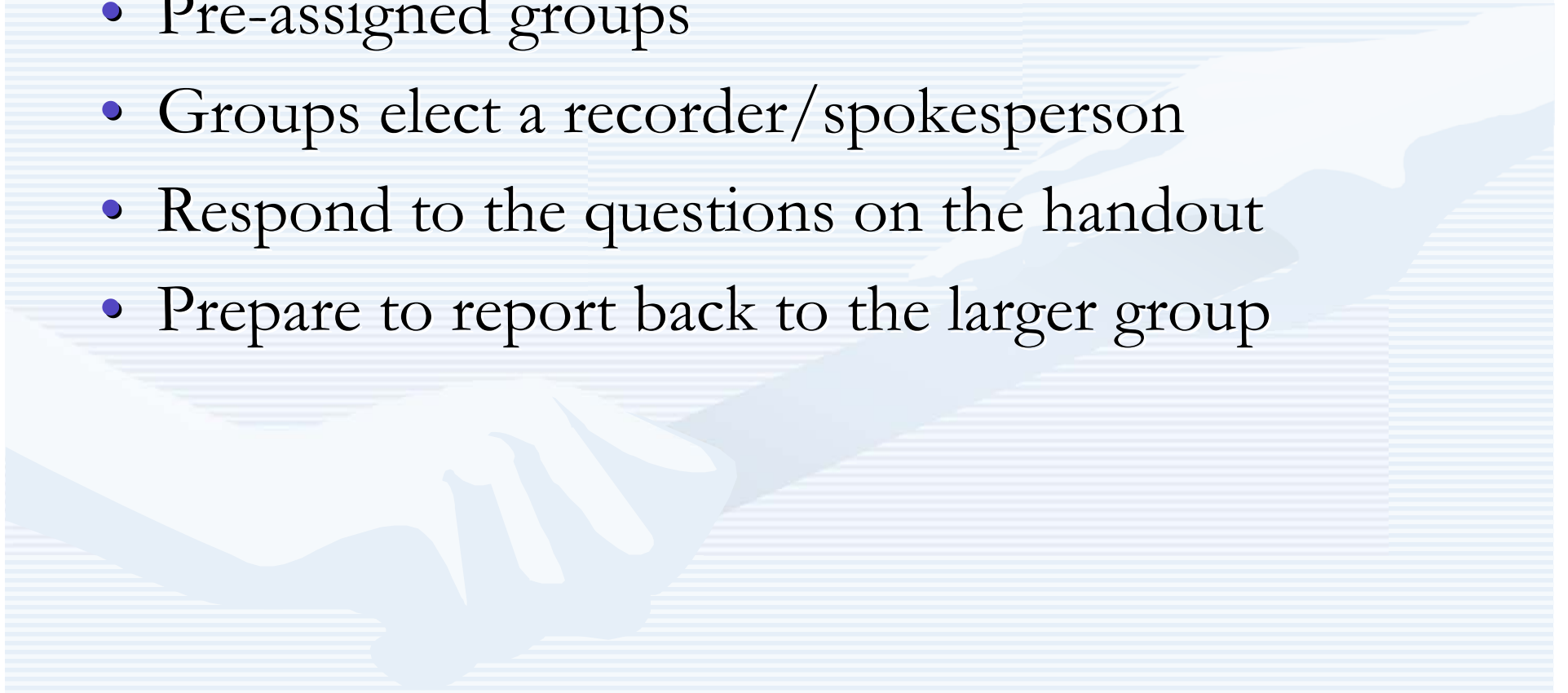
# Small Groups Report Back

# Keeping Strategic Plans Alive:
# Monitoring and Evaluation

# Keeping the Plan Alive

- From all of this should come a set of strategies for addressing
  - Stated Title V priorities (or a more focused version of them)
  - Existing state or federal mandates/ongoing efforts
  - Emerging areas of interest

# Keeping the Plan Alive

- You should know which of these can be absorbed within existing staffing patterns and organizational units, which require new funds, which require a re-alignment of staff and functions, which require networking, partnering and new coalitions, which require further investigation, and which need to simply go away

# Keeping the Plan Alive

- Once you've determined the strategy and established a set of *measurable objectives* you can develop the plan
  - A set of action steps
  - A timeline
  - Assignment of responsibility
  - Assignment of resources

# Keeping the Plan Alive

- Key to your success is your ability to *monitor the progress of the plan*, to provide effective oversight, to intervene when necessary to remove obstacles or to facilitate efforts, and to change course when necessary

- Key to our collective success is your ability to *honestly evaluate your efforts* to determine if your chosen strategy was effective in achieving your intended outcomes

# Monitoring the Progress of the Plan

- Many of us ascribe to the old adage that when you have great people, all you have to do is get out of their way

- While we're lucky when we have those people, we do them and the effort a disservice by not checking in, not providing feedback and not learning from what goes right and what goes wrong

# Monitoring the Progress of the Plan

- Assembling one or more leadership teams for these efforts and charging them with the responsibility of reporting their progress to the leadership and the larger group on a regularly scheduled basis is critical to keeping the plan alive and moving forward

# Monitoring the Progress of the Plan

- Periodically checking in with your stakeholders is also important
- You not only want to monitor the progress of your efforts internally, you want feedback on how it looks from the outside
  - They can also be helpful if efforts are being stalled somewhere
- One more reason to keep those advisory groups going - - - stakeholders are important to us wherever we are in the planning process

# Monitoring the Progress of the Plan

- *Reality Check*

# Monitoring the Progress of the Plan

- Given the importance of evaluation to your overall effort, you will want to continually assess the progress of your data systems
  - Have you received the latest report from the existing data bases?
  - Are your relationships still good with the folks who control the data you need?
  - Are there opportunities to participate in new data systems? Or to gather new data?

# Monitoring the Progress of the Plan

- If you are gathering new data for this effort, how is that going? What do the early reports look like?  Who is gathering the data? Who enters it? What incentives do they have for doing it right?

- It is absolutely essential that you provide feedback to those who gather and enter your data – if they don't believe it is important to you, you had better believe it won't be important to them!  Garbage in, garbage out

# Monitoring the Progress of the Plan

- If you have added new responsibilities to your grantees, who is going out to observe their progress?

- Do you bring them together periodically to discuss how things are going?

- Do you bring them in for training and technical assistance?

- What incentive is there for them to do this right?

# Monitoring the Progress of the Plan

- *Reality Check*

# Keeping the Plan Alive

- Monitoring the progress of the plan is an essential task in the planning cycle
- It involves keeping staff on task and motivated
- It involves keeping grantees accountable
- It involves keeping stakeholders informed
- It involves maintaining the integrity of data systems
- It is also an essential element in *evaluation*

# Evaluating Outcomes

- Monitoring allows you to evaluate your process
  - Did I do what I intended to do in the ways in which I intended to do them
  - If not, what changed and why
- Evaluation allows you to assess your outcomes
  - Did I achieve what I hoped to achieve through the processes I put into place
  - If not, why not
  - Were there other unintended outcomes of these efforts?

# Evaluating Outcomes

- There is insufficient time here to discuss the full array of evaluation models

- Don't forget your academic colleagues

- Don't forget private firms that specialize in evaluation

- Sometimes it is more appropriate to have some distance – to have an external evaluation

  – This may be necessary due to lack of staff capacity

# Evaluating Outcomes

- Suffice it to say that you usually need some form of comparison against which to judge your outcomes
  - Where you were at baseline (i.e., the data that led you to identify this as a critical need in the first place)
  - The objective you set at the outset – did you reach it?
  - Another state or county that did not address this issue
  - National norms
  - The literature

# Evaluating Outcomes

- Obviously, you need some source of data from which to make this comparison, which is why we figure this out at the beginning, while we are developing the plan

- Try not to engage in leaps of logic, "gee, low birth weight went down – must have been because I enrolled all those women in that smoking cessation class" though if you're forced to, at least be honest about it

# Evaluating Outcomes

- Remember, the results of our monitoring and evaluation become part of our needs assessment

- And we have to be prepared to *change*

- If something is not achieving the results we expect we need to lower our expectations or try something else

- Doing the same thing and expecting a different result is just silly

# Evaluating Outcomes

- This is probably our greatest failing as a field – the fail to evaluate what we do and even when we do evaluate, the failure to act on what we learn

- Part of this is political
  - No one wants to admit failure
  - No one wants to give up a favored program
  - Stakeholders fear there will be no or an even less inadequate substitute

# Evaluating Outcomes

- Part of it is our culture – state public health professionals rarely publish – it is not encouraged (and in some places it is discouraged), there is no reward for doing it, and it takes time away from the other things you do

- But if we don't publish these findings, we doom our colleagues to make the same mistakes over and over again, and we fail to advance the field

# Conclusion of Day One

- Tomorrow we will consider how we manage change in the process of creating and steering change
- Any housekeeping announcements